



# THEE \*6 HUMBUG AN IRREGULAR GAZETTE OF SHEFFIELD MUSIC

Investigate... calf by ca ...plus revealing free cd!





Figure 1. The "Apple SteamTop 1900"

### Thee Humbug Issue 6 – Summer 2008

#### Dear Humbugger,

It is a very excited Tiffin, who writes this editorial! Thee Reverend has most generously bought me a new technological device for my missives. It is pictured above and goes by the name of an Apple SteamTop 1900. How I squealed with delight when his grace finally put his hand in his pocket and spent his wad.

But, to business! It's been a fair old while since our previous issue, but we have spent that time wisely, discovering for you, dear reader, many most excellent and interesting musical gems. Within these pages you'll find the delightful melodies of The Voluntary Butler Scheme (not a scheme I'd be tempted to join, by the way!) the thunderous, rousing & pounding of Calf By Calf, the eclectic beat of We Start Fires and so much more to digest! Dive in and please don't forget the wondrous compilation CD tucked in at the back.

As ever with the most sincere of felicitations,

Tiffin the tea boy

www.theespc.com and www.myspace.com/theespc

#### Those who have served:

Editor: Tiffin the tea boy Sub editor: Gill O'Connor

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Cover Design: Based on an original work by Missy Tassles Big thanks to all the bands for their fantastic contributions.

### THE VOLUNTARY BUTLER SCHEME



Under the quirky moniker of The Voluntary Butler Scheme, Rob Jones has been quietly building a catalogue of heart warming and melodic pop songs, all lovingly documented in his studio-cum-bedroom. Lend your ears to his clever arrangements & harmonies and, frankly, you just have to be impressed when you realise he's a genuine solo artist.

"Yeah, i record it all in me bedroom - it's a proper sleep on wires, use drums as tables, eat your dinner off cymbals jobby. I've been toying with the idea of leaving the house and playing music for years. But I only played my first gig last October. After that I realised you need some songs that you aren't embarrased to sing. I've written most of my songs since then."

"So far i've been playing on me own live - in a one man band fashion - bass drum and all that. It's been said that i make the sound of Showaddywaddy alone...but people lie. I'm rehearsing with two other people at the mo and we're gonna do a couple of gigs coming up as a band which is exciting - i think it'll be easier to make some rooms rumble."

THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN

There's a real sixties feel to many of your songs, in a Neil Diamond/Monkees kinda way. What're your big influences, musically and lyrically?

I always think my music sounds like hip hop, until i talk to people about it or listen to it. It's heartbreaking! I listen to When I Was Born For The 7th Time by Cornershop a lot! And I think about it when I'm recording. So I'd say that's probably an influence. And I think about Harry Nilsson too. I like

his vibe and the style of his vocals. But, when i'm adding the synths I always think that's like the 80's hip hop shades - but maybe it's all in my head!?

I do get a Nilsson vibe in your music. I was brought up listening to "A Touch of Schmilsson"! Sounds like a lot of peope are getting good vibes from The Voluntary Butler Scheme. You've had some quality support slots recently and great press. Been having fun?

The VBS in session for Marc Riley!

Loads of fun. Doing the tour with Eamon (of Brakes) was amazing fun. We just drove round in my car and everything was so smooth and easy. We could be driving down a stretch of motorway, and we'd only have to mumble the word "coffee" and the universe would provide coffee. I supported The Boy Least Likely To recently. They've got an amazing fan base - girls scream during their set and everything - it's like an Elvis gig - sort of! Oh and i did a gig supporting The Mystery Jets at a student campus bar. That was like putting your nervous system in a paper shredder. Last week i did a really good one supporting Casiotone For The Painfully Alone. I broke my CD-selling record at that gig. That keeps happening...maybe I'm getting better?

So, if you were to volunteer as a butler, who would you wanna work for?

I could get along with being Noddy Holder's butler. I love some of those Slade songs. The big drums and his voice: It just knocks you over! Plus, I bet he don't live too far from my house, so the commute'd be ok!

www.myspace.com/thevoluntarybutlerscheme



### SOMETHING LIKE FIRE

Manchester based Something Like Fire are a band fiendishly – and joyfully – hard to pin down to one particular genre. As they say themselves, they're "still experimenting with different styles and influences." Such refreshing eclecticism deserved more than a single sample, so we've two excellent tracks from Something Like Fire on the accompanying CD. We spoke to vocalist/guitarist Mike..



Clearly, your music is very eclectic! But, what would you say are your main influences?

"Yes, our influences are diverse. Primarily, I would look back at people like Bowie and The Stones. Exile on Mainstreet is a constant reminder of how much passion and soul a band can put into a record. Bowie made brilliant music and he made

it so theatrical and exciting. I think a lot of that spirit is missing in modern music. I also look to people like Ian Dury and The Clash. Their cheeky attitude and raw energy definitely affects the way we write. In a modern sense, Mos Def's 'Black on both sides' LP is an incredible album. It is still so arresting and took Hip Hop somewhere else. The Boards of Canada make music unlike anyone else. It is so unsettling, which is also something we aspire to."

Do you think you'll settle on one particular style as you progress? "I would like to think that we won't have to. Coherency is definitely something we are thinking about when we record, we want every song to be a 'Something Like Fire' track. The way people listen to music is very

different nowadays with people listening to one song off an album instead of the whole piece of work. Our music is like a mix tape, because all the songs try to take the listener in a different direction, whilst maintaining the central qualities of a good melody, and the desire to make the listener move about."



get together?
Rich and I have been
playing music together
since we were 16. It's only
in the last year that we've
started taking the whole
thing more seriously.
Now we've added Joel on
keyboards, James my
little brother on bass and
finally Max, our drummer.

So how did the band

We've got two of your songs on the CD. Tell us about the first one, "Little Man Yellow"

Little Man Yellow is perhaps our most divisive song! It's about being in a romantic situation for the first time. The lyrics reflect how exciting and ultimately how disastrous that experience can be. For me the song sounds like what was like when you first started going out as a kid and didn't really have a clue what you were doing. I think every boy's had an Angela, a girl they put up on a pedestal, an infatuation if you like. We wanted to bring out the romance and the humour of that situation.

What've been the high points and low points for the band, so far?

Playing at Jabez Clegg in Manchester was a big highlight, after months of working on our sound, we finally got out there in a larger venue. It just clicked for all of us. It felt right. There haven't been any low points. The whole experience has been positive every step of the way. We can't wait to get on stage and start enjoying ourselves.

www.myspace.com/somethinglikefire

## VICTORIAN COSMETIC SURGERY - The Shocking Truth!

By Peabody McNulty III - Thee SPC History Correspondant.

Many of us are probably under the impression that 'cosmetic surgery'- be it in the form of a simple dental procedure or a full blown facelift - is a product of our contempory cult of celebrity, youth, and the glare of the omnipresent 'media'. But, as ever, such follisome activity is as old as the concept of celebrity itself.

Our historical investigations have revealed the origins and shocking extent of cosmetic surgery in Victorian Britain, brought about by advances in anasthesia, surgical

technique and most-importantly, photography.

The story begins in 1854. For the first time an official 'photographic portrait' was commissioned of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. But the Prime Minster of the day George Hamilton-Gordon, 4th Earl of Aberdeen, was decidely unenthusiastic. Historically, the monarchs portraits had always been subject to censorship and 'doctoring'. Aberdeen knew very well how much effort had been invested in keeping the Queen's true appearance a secret from the public at large. To his credit he had insight enough to realise that photography wasn't going to go away and he sought an alternative solution.



That solution came in the form of the surgical genius Joseph Lister. "Bring over the kraut hooknose and I'll have her dealt with in a jiffy," is probably a phrase that never fell from the Scot's Quaker-educated lips, but there you are. 'Corrective' surgery was scheduled immediately and performed with hugely successful results, as can be seen in the 'before' & 'after' photos to the right.

(Continues over the page...)



Figure 2: HRH Before



Figure 3: HRH After surgery

Naturally, word got about and Lister's techniques were widely - erm - dissected by doctors in Gentlemen's Clubs across the Empire. A new field of medicine began to emerge.

Certainly there was a market for it. Which father would not, for the sake of family honour and good marriage prospects, be tempted to tinker with the less than favourable looks of his spinster daughter? A bit taken off here, a bit added there and suitable suitors would soon be blazing a trail to their door.

As ever in Victorian Britain, it wasn't very long before those of a more entrepreneurial spirit set themselves up as 'corrective' - or even 'physiognomic' - surgeons. Sadly, in the dash to supply the gentry with a sugically improved appearance, corners were cut and dramatic failure the outcome more often than not.

No better is this illustrated than in the pitiful case of Lily Langtrey, famed actress, ravishing beauty and mistress to the Queen's eldest son, Edward Prince of Wales.



Figure 4: Lily Before



Figure 5: Lily After

Such was the disasterous consequence of Langtrey's ill-advised 'full-body make-over' that she immediately fell out of favour with HRH Edward, who was heard to exclaim - citation required - "God's trousers! WTF. MEGALOLZZZZ."

Soon after, Langtrey retired to the United States and opened a Rhode Island fish bar, to great commercial and critical acclaim. But her sexual confidence was shattered. Despite a succession of tawdry affairs Lily never married. She passed away, surrounded by the odour of halibut and dover sole, but little else.

### Let that be a lesson to you all!

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Hot on the heels of The Long Blondes album "Couples", crack LB rhythm section Reenie & Screech released a 7" single on Thee SPC by their drum & bass combo The Bon Bon Club. We sent hard-hitting music journalist and famed philanthopist/chocolatier Joseph Rowntree over to TBBC HQ for tea...

\*Claire from Slow Down Tallahassee is also in the band, but was "unavailable for comment", as they say.



The Other Two, Power Station, Mike & The Mechanics. How does it feel to be part of such an historic legacy of side project bands?

Screech: I'd like to think we're more part of the rich legacy of pure drum and bass acts. Lightening Bolt, Death From Above 1979, Calf By Calf, Bon Bon Club.

So admit it, you nicked your name from the Talking Heads side-project The Tom Tom Club, didn't you?

Reenie: Screech picked the name; I had to give him one small kernel of creative input. So he thieved a name.

Screech: My thinking was 'everyone loves sweets'

Many side project bands have gone on to eclipse their origins. Gorillaz and Broken Social Scene spring to mind. Do you see a bright future for The Bon Bon Club?

Reenie: Surely. We are now hardened to the foul reality of the music industry and ready to fight. You don't mess with Bon Bons.

Screech: Don't mess indeed. I recently claimed I was up for a fight by saying 'if it goes to fisty-cuffs, I'm ready', then realised the use of the word 'fisty-cuffs' negated any sense of a tough-guy image I was trying to cultivate. Bring it on!

Being time-poor, jet-setting pop stars, it must have made getting TBBC up & running a bit difficult. Is this why you decided to do covers?

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Reenie: Not really, I would just hear songs and fancy doing our own version. Some songs jump out as having the potential to sound pretty nice with only drums, bass and 'vocals'.





What made you decide on the songs to cover for the single?

Reenie: 3 factors: Is it easy to play? Is it easy to sing? Can we impose a simplistic glam rock beat on it? It helps if we like the songs too. I really wanted to cover 'Love is Blind' by Pulp, cos I liked the idea of getting Alan Smyth to record it. as he produced the original in 1992. It goes without saying, he did an ace job.

Do you think you'll start writing your own **Bon Bon Club songs?** 

Screech: I'm not sure. I've only written one song so far, which was all about getting lost whilst driving on the continent. But if I get another wave of inspiration any time soon I'll let you know.

Kiss famously, simultaniously released four albums by the four individual members of the band as four side projects. Do The Bon Bon Club envisage a similar plan, two side-side projects?

Reenie: I've got another side project on the go, Sheffield based super-group The Millipedes, with members of Texas Pete. The Motherfuckers, Chuck and Smokers Die Younger. Also, Emma (LB's quitarist

and keyboardist) and I have several projects on the go – we come up with a new concept daily. Our latest group is called Black Latte.

Screech: I recently did karaoke and found out I could more than hold my own on the mic when it came to rapping, so I'm thinking that could be a direction I might like to pursue. I'm in talks with Timberland to produce.

You were recently holed-up recording the new Long Blondes album. It'd be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to ask for the inside scoop. Any tantrums, arguments, drunken antics to offload on Thee Humbug?

Reenie: I'm drunk right now. But gossip is a little thin on the ground.

Screech: I had tantrums on a daily basis. I was sleeping in a child's bedroom while we were down there and I think I regressed...

THEE SPC RELEASED THE BON BON CLUB 7" SINGLE IN JUNE AND IT'S AVAILABLE FROM OUR WEBSITE.... Check out their version of The Cure's "Lullaby" on the accompanying CD.

www.myspace.com/thebonbonclub

### **Grammatics**

By Seth Whippet

For fans of: Radiohead, Arcade Fire, Cursive.

It's a shame to say it, but our friends in Leeds currently have it better. Loads of ace new bands, a plethora of good independent promoters and venues as well as a genuinely attractive selection of club nights means a trip up the M1 is currently a realistic and appealing prospect most weekends. The journey back the next morning is rarely as pleasant but, ahem, I digress...



One of those ace new bands - in fact, one of the ace-est - is Grammatics. Started just under two years ago by college friends Owen Brinley (vocals/guitar/malnourishment) and Dominic Ord (drums/anger management issues) with assistance from Rory O'Hara (bass/kleptomania) and, most recently, Emilia Ergin (cello/Swedishness), they've been talked about in reverential terms pretty much since their inception - and rightly so.

Owen: "Me and Dom ran a club night in York called Grammar. I remember Dom saying he wanted a classic English name for the band. One of the first things we found out we had in common was a love of Blur, and the art-pop side of Britpop before Oasis came along and destroyed everything. It also had to be a one or two syllable word, like Blur or Suede."

#### Did you know how you wanted Grammatics to sound?

Owen: "Definitely. We wanted to sound like an absolute mess, but a very controlled, calculated mess. If we hadn't done Grammar for a year all our songs would have been a lot more straightforward I think. I was coming up with alt.country songs for a year before we did Grammar, then all of a sudden we were blasting out The Faint and !!! which definitely influenced the rhythmic side of the band."



Owen: "Guilty, to an extent! I grew up listening to emo like Sunny Day Real Estate and Cursive - but it's all so far removed from the current crop of 'emo' bands. The term refers to such a broad spectrum now that it could really mean any band!"





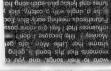


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### Can you see Grammatics selling a lot of records?

Owen: "Well, we're never going to be as big as Editors or Bloc Party. Our music is purposefully leftfield to an extent in that it excludes a percentage of music listeners from being able to understand it. It's too complicated for Joe Public to be able to listen to it and get into it straight away. On the other side of the coin we're very melodic... we're a pop band that doesn't respect the verse-chorusverse rules of pop music."

www.myspace.com/grammatics www.grammatics.co.uk







### LAURA GROVES



Interview by Gill O'Connor

It's not often I get knock-yer-socks-off excited about a new talent but that's what happened the first time I heard Laura Groves. And I HAD to hear more...and, y'know, get some new sock and stuff...

What's the first music you remember listening to and liking?

"My older brother was a bit of a prodigy and I used to love listening to him play the piano. I can't even remember what pieces he would play, just that they were usually quite dramatic and I found them really fascinating as a child. My mum and dad are both big jazz fans, and my dad plays the clarinet and saxophone-you can usually hear him playing from down the street...

"The house was full of music of some kind most of the time and I loved it. It seemed natural for me to get into playing something too."

What instruments do you play and how did you begin to learn them?

"I started to learn to play the piano when I was around 7. I went to lessons and I wanted to be as good as my brother was, ideally without doing any practice! I was a bit lazy with it really, and lost interest a few years later. I took up clasical singing lessons and threw myself into that with a bit more enthusiasm. As I started listening to a wider variety of music, I started to teach myself little bits on guitar. I did go for some lessons but my guitar playing isn't rooted in any kind of technical or classical knowledge like my singing or piano playing. A couple of years ago my interest in the piano was revived, mainly because it's still the instrument I feel most at home playing and, as I discovered, writing songs with.

On your website, you list influences such as Joanna Newsom, Joni Mitchell and Kate Bush. What is it you admire about them?

Well...you've listed female musicians there- my admiration for them doesn't necessarily come from the fact that they are successful females I don't think, although there probably is an element of the whole role model thing for me, being a female solo artist. I think, especially with Kate Bush and Joanna Newsom, I admire their innovation and

(...continued on the next page)

fearlessness in coming up with something new and being successful with it. My favourite Kate Bush album is "Hounds of Love" because It was very experimental at points and she largely produced it herself. "Ys" by Joanna Newsom is an epic work and pretty unusual, and I greatly admired her for performing the album in its entirity with a symphony orchestra on her tour. The album is really unusual yet it seems to appeal to a great deal of people because of the beauty of the songs.

50, if you could emulate one musician's career, whose would it be?

That's a rather tough question! I'd pretty much like Kate Bush's career but with more live appearances!

I believe you've delayed going to University to concentrate on your music? Was that a hard decision to make?

I had a place of Sheffield University to study Music and English. It was quite a hard decision looking back on it, but I can't really remember sitting down for hours on end and mulling it over- it seemed the obvious thing to do for me. It was a little bit daunting, but I comforted myself with the fact that I could go to university of any time, should the music not work out.



How do you write your songs? I think my songwriting habits are quite erratic. Sometimes, I'll get severe writers block, but there's no point in forcing it. I'd never perform a song that I felt was substandard or rushed, even it people liked it. But, thankfully, I do get

Kittens or lions? "Kittens!"
pasta or rice? "Rice, but only if it's with a curry."
TV or radio? "TV."
Piano or guitar? "Piano."

periods where songs just come to me.

Fluffy clouds and rainbows or thunder and forked lighning? "Thunder and forked lightening." Woodland or meadows? "Woodlands."

Whitby or Skipton? "Whitby. Although Skipton does excel in charity shopping and pork pies!"

Laura Groves will soon be releasing her debut album through Salvia Records www.myspace.com/lauragroves

### INDIETRACKS an indiepop festival

On an unfeasably, baking hot weekend in July, Indietracks festival arrived...Here's the views of a few attendees:

Pete Bee from Stoke indiepoppers Horowitz:

"Context is important. This is OUR festival. A festival with NO corporate connection; a festival that is NOT for the faddish, sheep-like rite of passage Glasto/V fest bores. It's off the beaten track in more ways than one. Take a look around and you could call it quaint, old fashioned and anachronistic - there are steam trains, real ale on tap and a relaxed, good mannered atmosphere akin to a private party. But look around again and listen to some of the most vibrant bands of the era performing on each of the three stages. It's a thrillingly modern experience. MJ Hibbett brings his Validators to perform a witty story and song

Our own Thee Reverend and Meriel from The Parallelograms.

set in the outdoor tent and Mexican Kids At Home wow the church stage with their innocent, fragile pop.

On the outdoor stage, Slow Down Tallahassee's harmonic pop gems sparkle and fizz, while Liechtenstein enchant and bewitch with their three-girl vocal, postpunk guitar pop.

On the main stage, Pocketbooks breathtaking set; the Parallelograms (left) rock out in the most twee way possible; the Mai 68s spike their guitars; Milky Wimpshake rattle and stun and The Manhattan Love Suicides rip through 19 minutes of the most thrilling, straight to the pleasure centre, noise-pop imaginable.

In a steaming hot moving train carriage, Gregory Webster's acoustic versions of I'll Still Be There and Snowbirds sound as innocent and full of charm as

### INDIETRACKS

they did to indiekids back in the late 80s and as a final fling on the Sunday night, Pete Green, The Smittens, The Bobby McGee's and Pocketbooks perform on the railway platform sending us, weary legged, back to campsites and Travelodges, with dancing melodies in our heads and confirmation of an indiepop manifesto in our hearts."



MJ Hibbett: "I was only at Indietracks for a few hours this year, but it was enough to remind me why I love II so much. We walked to the site through the countryside with my strolling companion comparing II to "Stand By Me" and when we arrived one of the organisers booked us our taxi home before regaling us with the full list of cask ales they'd be bringing on over the course of the weekend. You don't get that at Reading.

Whilst enjoying The Official First Pint Of The Festival they moved the train with us on it. I leant out of the window and told a passing Horowitz Band that, as

we were headlining that night (WE WERE, IT COUNTS) we'd demanded that they move the bar nearer to the stage for us, I hope they believed me.

Shortly after this about 80% of ALL the loveliest people I have met in the world of ROCK over the past decade all arrived at once, and the rest of the night flew by in a haze of songs, larfs, beer and dancing

24 hours later I was sat lumy parents' back garden at a

60th birthday party. listening to the husband of my Mum's best friend telling me how GRATE Margaret Thatcher was. All things considered, I'd rather have been in Ripley. Is it next year yet?"

M.I. Hibbett & The Validators





Trev of Lost Music/Indie-MP3: "The Saturday was the day when The Wedding Present came to town

and the ranks swelled to 1000 people and yet the atmosphere remained incredible. The sun tried to break people - but all I saw throughout the day were smiling faces - which were slowly turning pink under the glare of the sun - none more so than mine! But the pop thrills kept coming. Town Bike on the new outdoor stage starting the day with a bang! Or The Parallelograms on the main stage - by which time I was doing my stint on the Merch stall. That alone was a highlight: Seeing the people coming up and enthusing over badges, fanzines, 7" singles and CDs. Smiling faces everywhere. I got off the Merch stall just in time to see the set of the weekend by Pocketbooks. My My - what a band and what a reaction. Stunning stuff."

Martin of The Roadside Poppies:"The real highlight of indietracks for me was waking up with a massive hangover on Sunday morning then realising I had to be on the merchandise stall in 10 minutes. I really enjoyed it, and realised that I've always wanted to run a shop. I was so dazed and confused that it took me ages to work out the prices though!"



Pocketbooks: ""It meant a lot to us this year to finally play on the main stage, having been involved in all the previous events in various forms.

The crowd were totally brilliant and, although many of our friends were in the audience, it felt like we'd made lots of new ones too! It was definitely the most fun

we'd ever had as a band. We also loved the spontaneous acoustic sets on the train platform late on Sunday - a perfect end to a perfect weekend!"



I first saw Calf By Calf last year supporting some band that I can't quite remember...Anyhoo they were chuffin loud & different & far too few of them for the cacophany pulsing outta the stage like a nuclear testing facility on red alert. The audience instinctively took a few steps backwards, drink vibrated on tables, false teeth rattled in the nearby care-home. Awesome.

A brief and fairly spurious comparison would be that Calf By Calf are what The Jimi Hendrix Experience may have sounded like if Noel Redding hadn't bothered attending the audition and J had picked up the Bass instead. But how would the band descibe their sound?

Ad: LOUD

Hugh: and sexy...

Cool! A song like "Now I'm A Viking" is, pretty much viking -like in it's pillaging glory. So where do you get your inspiration for such aural assaults?

Hugh: A lot of the time we just play and see what happens, we kinda just work off each other until something sticks. So i suppose our main inspiration is spontaneity. Our song titles tend to be in-jokes,! We'll have a new song and one day it'll just get named after something



we were laughing about that day.

You've a pretty big sound for a two piece. Ever tempted to make it bigger with guitars, keyboards?

**Hugh:**We had a bit of keyboard on our demo, yet I dont really see us doing it live. My bass set up is pretty flexible so if we want a bit of a different sound I can just fiddle with a few settings. I do want more amps mind!

**Ad:** Everytime we start using something new we eventually find a way to do without it and just stick to the basics, i think we prefer it that way, really. And, anway, we couldn't fit any more instruments in our Nissan Micra!

What kinda music's floating your boat currently?

Hugh: Deerhoof, Bright Eyes and Murder By Death.

Ad: Ive been listening to a lot of Tera Melos and Maps and Atlases.

How do you rate the Sheffield music scene at the moment?

**Ad:** Its rate good! We seem to always end up playing with really different bands from indie to balls out metal. Up Periscope are my current local favs.

**Hugh:** Real good! Rolo tomassi are my favourites, yet I recently saw Slow Club and they are mint.

www.myspace.com/calfbycalf

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### DOWNDIME

Riccotta Hotcakes talks DIY, Nazis and squirrels with this lovely Leeds band.

I remember hearing your first demo, recorded for Futuresound. It was the best 4-track demo I ever heard, but Futuresound didn't pick up on it for the Leeds festival competition. Do you hold it against them?

Too kind, too kind. We think that Futuresound were a little impressed with it being a crappy sounding 4track tape. They have asked us to play with some pretty good bands, The Thermals, We Are Scientists. As for anything more, we were happy doing our own

thing, releasing singles through Squirrel Records.



#### Your tape was called "The **Oueeruption demos**". Care to elaborate?

We put it together after playing the Queeruption Festival in Amsterdam, Local Leeds art blues punks Mz Sojourn asked if we wanted to play at a festival in Holland a couple of weeks after our very first gig. Of course we said yes! They didn't mention at the time that it was Queeruption, a gay festival. We got off the ferry, hit a coffee shop, and then the venue, having had no sleep or food, and maybe a bit too much Dutch hospitality. We found the organisers in the middle of a massive discussion.

They were thinking of cancelling the festival! Some of them had been arrested disrupting a neo-Nazi rally in The Hague. After a couple of hours heated debate, they decided to go ahead. That was our cue to hit the stage, as openers, and get the party going. But we weren't in the best of shape. Ste's bass was unplugged throughout the first song, Ged's guitar strap broke... The crowd was expecting edgy punk and they just stood there scratching their heads. We saw a few at the back dancing though! Thankfully, we improved and had an amazing time. The other acts were fantastic, too. I guess Queeruption felt like an appropriate title for the demo because we'd pulled a victory out of the jaws of defeat.

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live bands a s with aim o performers and punters. ges for 2008 will see the at 7.30pm, with live

a dedicated 'party' room with the emphasis on being accessible but without being

expect it in the not too distant future. promises to

Street venue. an exciting Planet Zogg line-

friend or foe?

(0114 241 3040) or online at the

evening, it might

do you feel about squirrels, grey and red:

Red are best. We understand grey ones make a

Yeah, We're going to get the album out in due course, and maybe another single beforehand.

We are being busy Downdimers though, so

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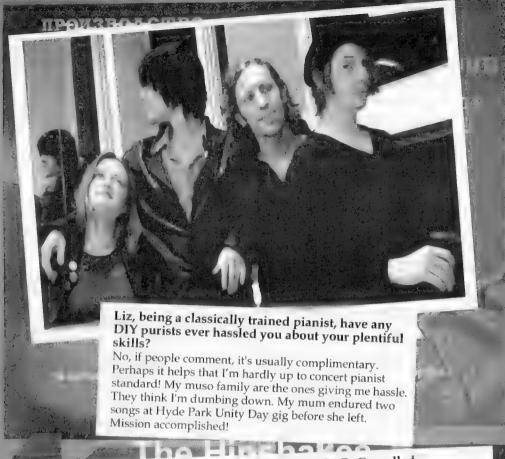
You've put out two 7"s on Squirrel record.

twin Any chance of an album? Incidentally, how

tasty and sustainable alternative to the hamburger.

Squirrel Records work really hard. They're a good

label to be involved with, but it takes time to get the money/pressing/distro stuff all worked out.



Ged, you've started a new club night with Jonny GoGoGoGo, called Indie Pop Night. Is this an extension of Downdime's famed love for a damn good house party?

Ged: We simply had to find a new venue, after we'd all moved out of the old party house! Jonny and I have been regular party buddies for some time and The new night has been good fun thus far! We been getting bands in that we love (Smokers Die Younger, Shrag, Darren Hayman) and we've all been dancing like twee-lovin-fools to both classic and new indie pop tunes.

Way back in Dot-Dash zine I compared your voice to "the guy from the Thrills". Have you forgiven me?

I've had worse. Actually, I thought it was a good review at the time...

Come & l

Find out more about Downdime at: www.myspace.com/downdime www.downdime.co.uk

Buy their vinyl from www.squirrelrecords.co.uk

### THE LONG BLONDES

An interview with Dorian Cox, by Darren Chuck

At the time of writing The Long Blondes are literally seconds away from releasing their second album "Couples". It's a bold step forward from their debut, "Someone to drive you home", with a nod towards the past but a gleaming eye on a blonde future. We spoke to guitarist Dorian Cox on the eye of their UK tour...



Rod

"Couples" sounds much more complete and organic than "Someone..." I

"Our set will be a mixture of old an

suppose that's not surprising, given the latter was a collection of songs you'd had for quite a while. But did you have a blueprint of what you wanted for "Couples" before you went into the studio?

D: "Not a blueprint as such, we just wanted to - interview cliche alert - make something that was a true reflection of where we are as a band at the moment. I don't think our musical ability, people's expectations of us and our own ambition were on the same level with the first record so it never quite achieved what it was expected to. That's helped us this time around though as we felt free to make an album that stands up on its own terms, not just three hit singles and a load of filler.

How did you come to work with Erol Alkan? I'm massively impressed with his production. He sounds like he's been a real member of the team.

D: We've known Erol for a few years and we knew from talking to him that



we've all got very similar approaches to listening to and making music and life in general, really! I don't really remember asking him to produce the album, it was more a case of "We begin recording on monday", "Oh, what time shall i turn up then?"... The best thing about him is he's new to producing and doesn't have an ego like a lot of established producers do. He's more of an ideas man in the vein of George Martin or Brian Eno.

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tweaked as promotions and any commanager Ali Peck explained.
"We've stopped playing indic music

but not every week.

This Saturday's event promises a raturary detox' bar as well as a host of other birth-

Advance tickets for Shuffle (15 10)

Advance tickets for Shuffle (15 10)

Advance tickets for Shuffle (15) and

Advance tickets for Shuffle (15) and

What strikes me most about the album is it's so incredibly clean and lean. There's not a note or nuance out of place (both musically and in the fantastic production & mixing.) It sounds very deliberate, but also very natural. Do you think this album reflects what The Long Blondes are and always have been?

D: It's definitely a reflection of where we are right now. a lot of the albums that inspired us whilst making this one ('Sulk' by The Associates, 'Colossal Youth' by Young Marble Giants, 'Oscillations' by Silver Apples amongst others) were both very self-contained and in a world of their own but still have a live sound to them. The trick was to not over-produce it by putting fifty guitars on each track but to consciously make it sound produced in the same way that a film is, i.e. there's a definite start, end and some kind of thematic link throughout the whole thing.

Musically the album sees you using different textures and sounds from the more straightforward approach of "Someone..", but lyrically it's similar territory. Is love still a battlefield for The Long Blondes?

D: Yes, to quote Pat Benetar, "love is a battlefield". I'm consciously trying to write about different things for the next set of songs but i find you always get the most inspiration/frustration out of writing about the politics of love...



You've always had praise for your b-sides. Can we look forward to some great "Couples" out-takes?

D: Thanks. Yes, we'll definitely continue to write new songs for the b-sides. We do get some really good remixes sent to us but we'd rather put them out as a separate entity and use the b-sides as a way of furthering the frontiers of the long blondes universe. There's a couple of songs that we didn't put on the album and a few more we recorded in sheffield straight afterwards which we're really pleased with, one of which features millipedes singer and erstwhile 'blondes bassist reenie making her yocal & songwriting debut...

Did you take a break from writing immediately after completing the album? Or is it an imperative to continue putting pen to paper?

D: We've never really been ones for sitting around in dressing rooms strumming acoustic guitars but we're always working on things. We all tend to nurture our own ideas and then get together for a couple of weeks when everything seems to come together naturally. It really is as easy as that...

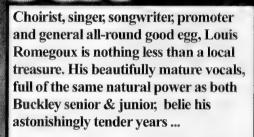
"Couples" is out now on Rough Trade.
Naturally, I purchased the vinyl,
but I'm told it's also available on
CD and as one of those 'young persons
downloads'. Also look out for a
"Singles" compilation on Angular very
soon!

www.thelongblondes.co.uk www.myspace.com/thelongblondes



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### LOUIS ROMEGOUX



I started out singing classically in Sheffield Junior Choir when I was about 6 and then on to my choirboy days at Sheffield Cathedral. I still sing with the Cathedral Choir now as a choral scholar. When I was 10 I heard Jeff Buckley's "Grace". It made me want to sing and write songs myself. So I learned to play guitar, picking up technique from Neil Young, Tom Morello,

Akli D, Manu Chao, Stephen Brodsky and more recently people like Andy Duxfield from Sheffield act the Blues Theatre Script - a bafflingly good guitarist.

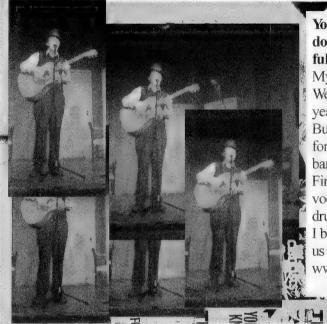
You've donated "Roses" for the zine CD, tell us about it...

Roses is one of the few songs where I've written set lyrics. I tend to improvise lyrics on the spot at gig. Roses is about a lover contemplating what to do with this love that cannot be. All very melancholic and teenage angst-ridden!



### Is your French background a big influence on your music? Do you draw inspiration from the chansonnier tradition of the likes of Georges Brassens?

Definitely. My dad's record collection has influenced me massively. French music is so varied and there's so much quality too. I was introduced to people like Jacques Higelin, Manu Chao and Francis Cabrel from childhood. More recently however I've been listening to La Rue Ketanou and Tryo - master songsmiths!



### You used to be in The Feds, so do you ever miss being in a full band?

My time with Feds was great. We were together for about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years and had some right laughs. But university commitments forced us to split. I've a new band now called 'Watch This Fire Spread'. We've three vocalists, a pianist, bassist and drummer - oh and occasionally I bring out the accordion! Check us out at

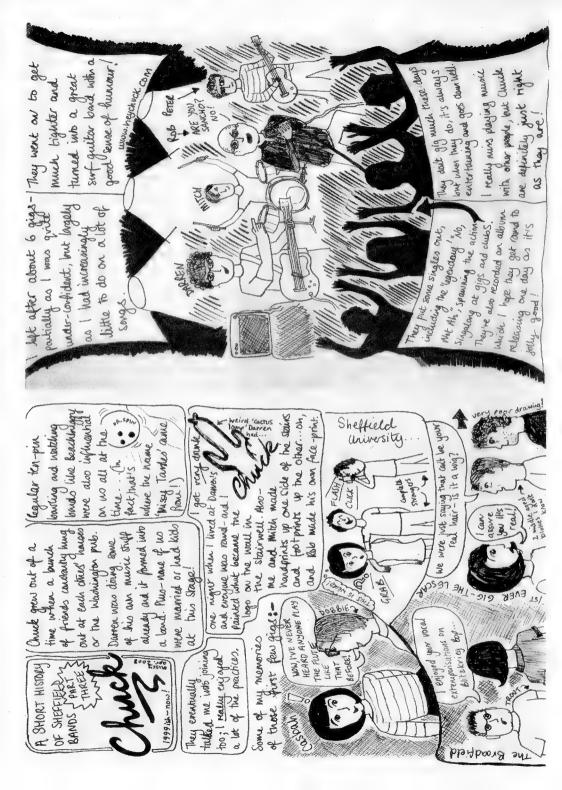
www.watchthisfirespread.co.uk

### As a promoter, you've championed a lot of acoustic/folk artists in Sheffield...

Yeah, last year I ran the weekly acoustic night at Café Moco on West St and I also ran my own festival, the Acoustic Picnic in Walkley featuring acts like Richard Masters, Liz Ryder, The Marygreenes. There's been so much talk in the press of Sheffield's reputation for bands - but just look at the acoustic scene too! Sheffield is thriving and there's plenty of opportunities for artists to get their acoustic guitars out and keep music live.

www.myspace.com/louisromgoux





### CHAMPION KICKBOXER

Of all the bands who have worked with Thee SPC, Champion Kickboxer are the ones with whom we've had the longest relationship. We've watched them evolve from a quirky student band recording demos in their cellar, to the intriguing quartet of today. They last last featured in Thee Humbug way back in issue #1, not long after they'd released their first single "Like Him + Her + Her + Me". Since then Champion Kickboxer have release the album "Perforations" and, last November the EP "Candlepower". The song "Master Of Dancing" from the "Candlepower" EP is included in the free CD accompanying this zine. We spoke to Champion Kickboxer guitarist Sam Marsh about the band and their records...

How would you describe the difference between Perforations and the songs on Candlepower?

Sam: I guess we've grown up or something. Perforations was a nice enough collection of songs but there was something unsatisfying about it. The arrangements and the playing were perhaps

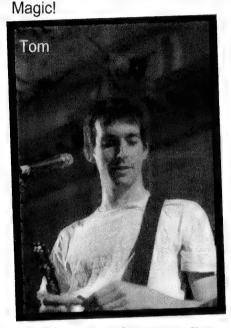


a bit over-thought. Everything about Candlepower came more naturally and I hope that comes across on the record. Add to that the wonderful job that Alan Smyth (who recorded) and Kramer (who mixed) did and we've ended up with something we're actually quite proud of.

Why did you decide to have the EP recorded and mixed by other people, when you did perforations yourselves?

Sam: Recording Perforations was hard work and extremely time consuming because we were having to learn to do all the things that we could have got experienced sound engineers and producers to do for us. A full year went by between starting recording and ending up with the masters and that's a lot of time." (....continued on the next page)

We decided we wanted a quicker more pain-free way to do it and it just so happened that Kramer was on the lookout for interesting bands to produce. With no-one stumping up the money to ship him across (or us out there) he did a distance production job. The mixes arrived by email on Boxing Day and even listening to them on my mum's awful stereo convinced me he'd done an excellent job. Finally our music was in 3D.



When can we expect some more recordings from you?

Sam: We've recorded a few new songs and they'll be the start of whatever it is we release next. I guess by 2009 we'll be due to release something new. Also, we've built up an archive of mp3s on our website www.championkickboxer.co.uk. You might find something you haven't heard before there...

A recent Sandman gig review said you were "deliberately obtuse" and "far from easy listening". How do you see yourselves compared that that?

Sam: "Deliberately obtuse" may have been a fair criticism a few years ago, but

I think that came from our effort to keep ideas fresh and not sit back on the familiar. I hope we've now found a better balance between striving for originality and making coherent music. As for "far from easy listening", well I think that says more about how immediate the mainstream has become. I mean, thirty years ago even household names like Bowie were making music people would find difficult to palate were it released now.

### What's been your favourite gig?

Sam: Personally, that was the launch of our album, Perforations, at the 1st birthday of Electric Blanket the club night we co-ran at the Matilda Social Centre. There was an incredible atmosphere and we played with some of our best musical friends, namely James Brodie and Hexa. Those were the days!

www.championkickboxer.co.uk www.myspace.com/championkickboxer

### Diamonds in the mine: part 5

Digging Deep For Sheffield's Musical Heritage!

It's time once again to take a trawl through the vaults of Sheffield's musical history to exhume three more fine specimens from yester-year. Let's start by casting our minds back to the late 80s.

Sugardrive (1989-93)



Sugardrive formed in 1989 and their atmospheric, dreamy psychedelia chimed with the "shoegazing" scene of the time. They soon picked up a good live following in the city and they regularly gloged sharing bills with local peers The Suncharms and Cradlevard, Citing a shared love of My Bloody Valentine, Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr and with the flange and wah-wah pedals turned up to max, their songs still sound incredibly contemporary today. Three years into their career, they signed to Sheffield's Native Records and set about recording their debut

album "See What Happens"in 1992. They say timing is everything and sadly for Sugardrive, theirs was a touch misfortunate. With the album in the bag, Native folded and it failed to see the light of day. The same year, founding bassist Simon Taylor left the band.

Sugardrive ploughed bravely on into 1993. One memory that must still stick in the their minds from April that year is their appearance at John Peel's final Road show. Part of the Sheffield Sound City event at the Leadmill, it saw them sharing the bill with an increasingly upwardly mobile Pulp. After that the band split. Drummer Neal Robinson now enjoys local fame with the Riddimtion Sound System and singer/guitarist Richard Gibson recently returned to the stage with the psych-folk duo Antique Doll.

Three fine slices of their ethereal psych-rock can be found on their myspace page at http://www.myspace.com/sugardriveuk

#### Seafruit (1999-2002)

Hailed by the Melody Maker as "special as The Smiths and The Stone Roses once were" Seafruit's perfectly crafted and sweeping indie pop rock soon began to make waves. Debut single, the swirling, sentimental and anthemic "Looking for sparks" in March 1999 was swiftly followed by "Hello World" in July that year, bringing a taste of chart success and entering the charts at number 59. That summer they played on the new bands stage at Leeds and Reading, decked out in white lab coats to universal acclaim, before finishing off an eventful year with an 18-date tour of the UK. June 2000 saw them release their third single, the excellent and lyrically astute "What If Everyone You Ever Loved Wasn't There?" Further UK tours with Drugstore and Headswim in September paved the way for the release of their self-titled debut album in October. The album was well received and had echoes of fellow Sheffield indie stars Pulp, none more so on the superb "Assassin".

2001 saw the five-piece concentrate on recording in their (now legendary) "2 Fly" studios, writing the best part of two albums. Sadly, the only work to see the light of day was the



single "What If Everyone You Ever Loved". Sadly, shortly after that, the band fizzled out as, Bassist Alan Smyth recalls, "Our German label Revolver and our UK label Global Warming fell out big time over money after 5,000 CD sales were mysteriously unaccounted for."

Singer Geoff Barradale moved into band management and now famously manages Arctic Monkeys. Guitarist Tom Hogg formed Hoggboy and Smyth, universally credited with discovering the Arctic Monkeys, concentrated on recording and production at 2Fly Studios.

For more information and music from Seafruit go to: http://www.myspace.com/seafruit

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### **Rumpus (2001-6)**

If ever there was a band's band in Sheffield, it had to be Rumpus. Danny Lowe (vocals/bass), Ian Hutchinson (guitar) and Dave Attwood (drums), better known as Sheffield's warped psychedelic rockers Rumpus burst onto the live scene in 2001. Taking in influences from The Meat Puppets to Ivor Cutler and Nirvana through to Captain Beefheart, their prowess swiftly grew on the back of their mind-blowing live shows and impressive set of self-released LPs and EPs. Described by one reviewer as "kind of metal combined with easy listening" it was their wacky song titles ("Stump Muffet" and "Root Fizz") and their subjects (griffins, star foxes and fish) that really struck a chord with the punters.

2004 saw a pretty big shake-up in terms of the Rumpus sound and line-up as they went from a three to five-piece



with the addition of Simon Banks on guitar and Cris Moody on bass. Their album "Ball of Snakes", masterfully fashioned by Alan Smyth, saw a heavier and darker but no less unhinged sound than before. Pick of the bunch had to be the fantastically primal and Nirvana-influenced "Woods". With a pre-Arctic Monkeys Geoff Barradale installed as their manager their future looked very rosy indeed. Quelle surprise early in 2006 when it was announced just prior to their "Why Does It Hurt When I'm Me?" EP launch that they were to split with immediate effect. Danny's new band Crystal Teet Heart took shape pretty swiftly after Rumpus's demise and still carries the torch for their unique brand of warped prog-rock, while Dave and Ian now play in the equally delightful Baby Long Legs.

Check out Rumpus at http://www.myspace.com/rumpusmusic

So there you have it. Another three fantastic bands spanning three decades of music in the Steel City. That's it until the next time. Toodle pip for now music fans.

Denzil Watson

### THE ROCKY NEST

The Rocky Nest are a five piece from Hull. It's probably fair to say their sound falls into that genre somewhat perjoratively known as 'twee'. But it's a label they seem happy to have, albeit with a kink. Their own website suggests this analogy: "Imagine Belle and Sebastian wandering into a dodgy massage parlour to be greeted by the lovely Felicity Kendall." Quite!



"When we got togther back in 2005, our aim was to play quite gentle, pretty pop/folk music. But after a few line-up changes we embraced electric guitars and turned the amps up to a staggering 2! We're still into pop but now we can be a bit uglier, snarling and more confident than before."



That's apparent in their song "Ain't nothing fancy" with its mixture of filthy distorted bassline, Velvet's drums and a cute melodica. They've got plenty of indiepop charm, too:

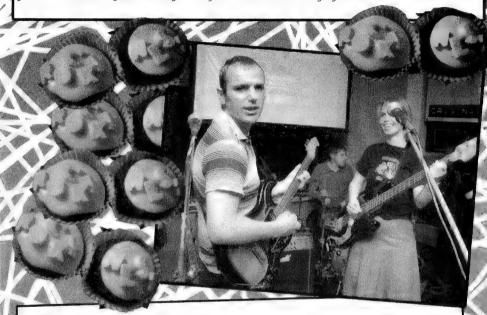
"Our songs have always been songs of hope, colour, life and rejoicing. A songs like "Journeys End" may be about being home alone, sick and tired, but it's also about the future and believing some good will come! We've all got to get up in the morning and throw ourselves into the day haven't we?"

"Journeys End" features on the accompanying CD. It's one of the bands's older songs: a delightfully shambolic affair, and it warms the heart like a singing kettle greets a weary traveller.

SUDD ANY CHI STISS

"When we first started gigging we were incrediby nervous and it was just so, so exciting. The band and the audience knew it could all go wrong at any moment! But we're a lot more together now. Musically, we're inspired by bands like Herman Dune, Belle and Sebastian, The Essex Green, Donovan, Fonda 500, Salako, Bitmap. And we love the whole DIY ethos: home recording, making posters & badges and giving out cakes at gigs!"

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### So what have been The Rocky Nest's high points so far:

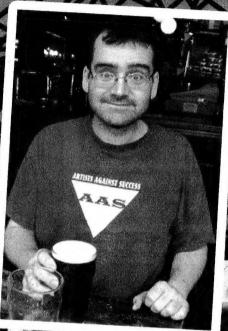
"We've been lucky enough to have supported Aberfeldy a couple of times and played with Camera Obscura and Thomas Truax and Headlights, Oppenhiemer. But I think the highest points are yet to be reached. This line up is so good and each time we practice or play it's incredibly exciting..."

The Rocky Nest are: Paul, Carl, Hannah, Lucia and Viv.



www.myspace.com/therockynest

### MJ HIBBUIL



For his outpouring of INFORMATION alone, nevermind his impressively broad back-catalogue, MJ Hibbett commands respect. (Check out his website, where you can read the lyrics of every songs he's released AND delve into his personal notes on each.) While most artists will deliberately avoid singing about the supposed mundanities of existence (no doubt a contractual obligation, something to do with giving the punters marketable aspirations) MJ Hibbett approaches life head on. "We're (we being MJ & his band The Validators) always trying to write songs about actual real-life things that are happening now, rather than repeating the same old teenage clichés so many people think they can get away with. We are, however, neither "hip" nor "cool", and especially not "edgy".

So we get fantastic musing on starting a new job "Good Luck In Your New Job", where he sagely suggests toning down your conversation until you know what your new collegues are really like, and "Do The Indie Kid" about how to dance at indie discos (which is a bit of an in-joke for indie kids really, but that's half his audience, so what the hell.) And on the accompanying CD we have "Honey, Honey You Work Too Late". Now, I was gonna ask Mark to give me some sort of explanation about this song, but it turns out he's already done that on his website! So here it is, as culled from the aforementioned:

"On the evening I was first having a go at Even When You're Glad It's Gone, the Light On My Landing was, yet again, staying really late to try and get some things finished off at work. At about 8.30 she rang to let me know she was on the way home, and so I set off to meet her, taking a pen and notepad just in case any more words for the above mentioned song popped into my head.

However, as I strode through Lower Leightonstone towards the tube station, my...



...feelings about her having to work extra hard suddenly FORMED themselves into song, and almost straight away the first two verses appeared. Later that evening I found myself pretty much saying them straight out to her, without her noticing that it was actually in RHYME, and the bits in brackets basically developed to take in her RESPONSES to my concerns. It's not the first time we've had this conversation!

The next morning she set off again to do some MORE work, and as I thought about how UNJUST it was that someone so brilliant should have to go and do SO much extra work to make up for the twits and tossers who had left at 3.30pm the previous day, KNOWING that they could leave things for her to do instead, the rest of this song arrived. Well, actually, quite a lot MORE of this song arrived in the form of some rather VIOLENT imagery to do with how such people might be DEALT with, but I thought it was, perhaps, a bit much, so SHAVED it back to the rather rocking little number you have before you now.

I mean all of it, especially the last verse."

Being somewhat in AWE of MJ's wordsmithery, I asked whether he fancied penning an article himself, in reply to which I received the following...

"Afternoon! I had a bit of a think about what sort of article to write, and have instead writ a POEM! Yes, a POEM! Right, here we go then:"

#### What I Always Think While Watching Poetry

I go to a lot of gigs and sometimes end up watching poets and getting ANNOYED. It's the laziness that irritates me - I don't turn up and read MY lyrics out of a crappy little notebook, so why on earth should they be allowed to get away with it? Instead of getting all wound up about it I thought I'd take them on at their own game, like so:

If you can't be bothered to learn an instrument
At least learn the lines
If you can't be bothered to learn the lines
At least make it rhyme
If you can't be bothered to make it rhyme
At least make it scan
If you can't be bothered to make it follow roughly the same scanning system throughout
At least make the subject matter interesting
If you can't make it interesting
Keep it short.

www.mjhibbett.com



### Thee Humbug #6 Thee CD

### \*\*\* Insert your own pithy comment here \*\*\*

1	The Voluntary Butler Scheme	"Trading Things In"
2	Something Like Fire	"Little Man Yellow"
3	The Bon Bon Club	"Lullaby"
4	Grammatics	"The Manageress"
5	Laura Groves	"I Am Leaving"
6	Calf By Calf	"Now That I'm A Viking My Life Is Much More Exciting"
7	Downdime	"Hate The Morning"
8	Louis Romegoux	"Roses"
9	Champion Kickboxer	"Master Of Dancing"
10	Something Like Fire	"New World Wonder"
11	The Rocky Nest	"Journeys End"
12	MJ Hibbett	"Honey Honey"

If your CD is knackered, get in touch via our website:

www.theespc.com

www.myspace.com/theespc

